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UnWasted

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Maurice Undergraduate Initiative 2014-2015
Final Analysis
UnWasted
Joshua J. Salvador

It was Tuesday April 9, 2013, my first day of work at a catering event at Western. The night had been going great, no spilling drinks on customers, no dropping platters of food, free food for dinner. I thought to myself, “this is a really cool job,” but it wasn’t till then, the first time I’ve seen a hotel pan full with parmesan crusted chicken being tilted to fall into a five gallon bucket. My reaction was full of disgust; it felt shameful, sinful even, to be throwing out perfectly good food. I asked my supervisor, “Are we allowed to take food home?” “No, it’s a liability issue if we were to let people take home food prepared by us,” replied my supervisor. I asked, “Would it be possible to donate this food to a food pantry?” and that’s where my journey began.

That night drove my passion to stop letting food go to waste and it wasn’t until recently that I really had the time to get things rollin’. My plan was to connect the department I currently work for (WOU Retail Dining) and the WOU Food Bank together to get food to go UnWasted. It is a fact that about 59 percent of Western Oregon University students face hunger or “food insecurities” and a decline in academic performances is correlated with food insecurities (Patton-López et al., 2014). So wouldn’t it be great for the WOU community to not only get the non-perishable foods available at the food bank, but fresh perishable foods as well?

This project started very slowly as my plan of action only started to pop up in my head in early October of last year. It started by having a meeting with Jane Cameron- Jensen, Chef Manager, and Karen J. Nelles, Foodservice Director on what I wanted to do and how I could do it. We talked about some of the obstacles I had to face, where and how food should be stored when in transportation to the food bank, which foods I would be able to take to the food bank,

and the legal issues that must be dealt with before I could move onto the next step of my project. To comply with any food service health laws and protocols, my first task was to find out if the campus food bank had a thermometer for their refrigerator, a temperature log, and if a health inspector would come to inspect the food bank. To gain any information of the subject matter I contacted the food bank director, Mariah Custer. Within a few days of dead week in the fall term, I was able to schedule a meeting with Mariah and she was able to give me the information that I needed; thermometer was a go, a temperature log was not available, but one would be ready to go, and a health inspector indeed came to inspect the food bank. Another part of my project that I thought might be interesting is that I would make a one second a day kind of video showing the amount of edible food we send to the compost bin every day. The video would consist of a one second video clip from every day that I would work in the catering kitchen throughout the 2014-2015 school year.

When the new term came around so did another food bank director. It had seemed that Mariah had transferred to another school, meaning I had to explain my whole project over again to a new food bank director. After contacting and having a brief meeting with the new and current food bank director, Adam Jensen, he was up to speed on my project and what I wanted to do. I explained that volunteers would have to fill out a form, a form that I had to make which includes: Date, Name, Items Picked Up, and Product Placement (where will the food be stored?) when picking up the food, and that the food must be consumed within three to four days after it was picked up. After that meeting I was good to go, ready for the first delivery, or so I thought.

I then was hit by another barrier, the busy schedule of the food director. After the meeting with Adam, I contacted my supervisor Mrs. Cameron-Jensen, and asked if I was able to take the first load of food to the food bank. In her response, she said Karen wanted to meet

briefly on the progress of my project. We originally scheduled a meeting for the 3rd of April, but something came up and Karen was not available. As of today I am still waiting upon that meeting to get food into that food bank.

The learning experience of this whole project was immense. Stemming from the ideas I had, it made me research things online that I could incorporate or was correlated to the project. For example, I learned how to make and edit videos on iMovie and Final Cut Pro, which was difficult for me because I am not a regular Mac user. I would watch videos on YouTube and use the technology tutoring hours in the Technology Resource Center at the Hamersly library for help. Prior to figuring out we even had a technology resource center here, I ran all across campus trying to find which computers would have iMovie or Final Cut Pro. This adventure brought me to meet different faculty here on campus, especially in the ITC building. Amongst the other things I researched on the internet, I came across a study based on the WOU community and I learned that 59 percent of students here have food insecurities. I would have never thought any school, let alone this one, would have such a high percentage of student food insecurities, and it's really shocking to know that there are that many students that go hungry.

In my opinion, the purpose of this project has not been met, however this is an ongoing project and I will be continuing to achieve the solution; getting edible food to the food bank. Although this project hasn't met its purpose yet, slowly I have been creating an awareness of how much edible food we throw into the compost bin. Hopefully this can speed up the process or possibly cut down on certain foods that are always being thrown out; perhaps a survey at allegro and express to see what students/faculty like and don't like? Either way, any of these will achieve the purpose of this project, to get food to go UnWasted.

The successes I found though this project is the fact that it did what it was intended to do. I found a problem I deeply care about and am finding ways to push through the barriers that are in the way of me and the solution. This project made me do some 'outside' learning in which I took time outside of the classroom to provide my project and myself with as much information as possible to make this a successful and fun project. I find it successful that I am now very familiar with video editing programs, communication with individuals of higher positions, and overall knowledge of the amount of food products that go wasted on this very campus. The only disappointment I have is the fact that I have to be very patient, in that I must wait for schedules in order to get meetings. I feel that it is very hard to be patient when every day matters and knowing that every day clean edible food is being thrown out instead of being sustenance for someone in need.

Though we are students and have homework, work, study, and examinations', starting early is the key. With this type of project or any project where time matters, one must be able to get the project started as early as possible. In fact, that was probably one of my mistakes; I didn't allow for ample time to accommodate for other people's schedules. I should have started earlier and anticipated these kinds of issues. Brainstorm early and dream your wildest dreams; achieve. With that being said, real life isn't Neverland; we aren't all lost boys who can fill up on imaginary food. Let's go UnWasted.

References

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